

A Parent/Carers Guide to Challenging Conversations

What are Challenging Conversations:

A Challenging Conversation is where you have to manage emotions and information in a sensitive way. There are many different types of challenging conversations such as:

- Discussing poor behaviour or poor decision making
- Discussing personal problems such as poor mental health, bereavement or changes at home
- Offering comfort or reassurance during tough times
- Dealing with delicate and distressing world events and conflict
- Discussing changes in identity or exploring identity



2. Keep it calm and age-appropriate

You know your child best. Use age-appropriate language, watch their reactions, and be sensitive to their level of anxiety.

Keep in mind that children take their emotional cues from adults, so try not to overshare your fears. Speak calmly and be mindful of your body language.

Remember that it's OK to not have the answer to every question. You could explore these together.

'That is a great question, I am not sure of the answer, shall we explore it together?'



4. Focus on the Positives

It's important children do know people are helping each other with acts of courage and kindness. Find positive stories, such as the first responders assisting people, or young people calling for peace. The sense of doing something, no matter how small, can often bring great comfort.

See if your child would like to participate in taking positive action, donating to charity or speaking to school about opportunities to positively engage.

'Have you seen some of the inspiring people who are supporting others in the conflict? It's good to read about kindness in times of conflict'



6. Take care of yourself

Children will pick up on your own response to the news, so it helps them to know that you are calm and in control.

If you're feeling anxious or upset, take time for yourself and reach out to other family, friends and trusted people.

Be mindful of how you're consuming news: Limit checking in on what is happening to twice a day.

Make some time to do things that help you relax and recuperate.

1

1. Find out what they know and how they feel



Choose a time and place to bring this up naturally for example mealtimes. Avoid discussing difficult topics just before bed. Start by asking what they know, how they are feeling, where they got their information from. Highlight that different sources of information have different authenticity or levels of bias. Take the opportunity to reassure them and potentially correct any inaccurate information.

Remind them that they can talk to you or another trusted adult whenever they like.

'Have you seen what is happening in the news? how does it make you feel?'

2

3. Spread compassion, not stigma

Conflict can often bring with it prejudice and discrimination. Avoid labels like "bad people" or "evil" and instead use it as an opportunity to encourage compassion. Consider taking the stance of 'we side with the innocent and victims'.

Even conflict in a distant country, can fuel discrimination on your doorstep. Check that your children are not experiencing or contributing to bullying. Encourage them to talk to you or another trusted adult.

We should each do our part to spread kindness and support each other.

'Its not okay for someone to be unkind to someone else, have you reported it?'

3

4

5. Close conversations with care and check in

As you end your conversation remind your child that you care and that you're there to listen and support whenever they're feeling worried. If it's just before bedtime, finish up with something positive such as thinking of positives from the day or plans to look forward to.

Continue to check in with your child to see how they're doing.

'How are they feeling? Do they have any new questions or things they would like to talk about with you?'

5

6



How to manage a Challenging Conversation

Thinking about you.....



STEP 1: RESTATE.
 REPEAT WHAT YOU'VE HEARD IN YOUR OWN WORDS.
 This helps you to check understanding and gives you time to think.
 Remember: Thinking time is good!

STEP 2: CONTEMPLATE.
 COUNT TO 10 AND REFLECT
 Taking a moment to reflect. What does this mean for you. Consider intentions and impact.

STEP 3: BREATHE.
 CONSIDER A RESPONSE.
 Allow time to settle any emotions you may be feeling before you respond.

STEP 4: COMMUNICATE. SPEAK WITH COMPASSION AND THOUGHTFULNESS.
 When you allow yourself time to feel and process your emotions, it's easier to speak to others respectfully, assuming good intentions and seeking understanding.

REPEAT → FEEL → THINK → BREATHE → CONNECT



Step 1: Repeat
 Say it again.



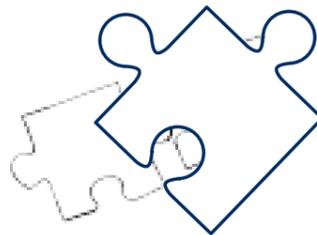
Step 2: Feel
 Put yourself in their shoes.



Step 3: Think
 Count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.



Step 4: Breathe
 In through the nose; out through the mouth.



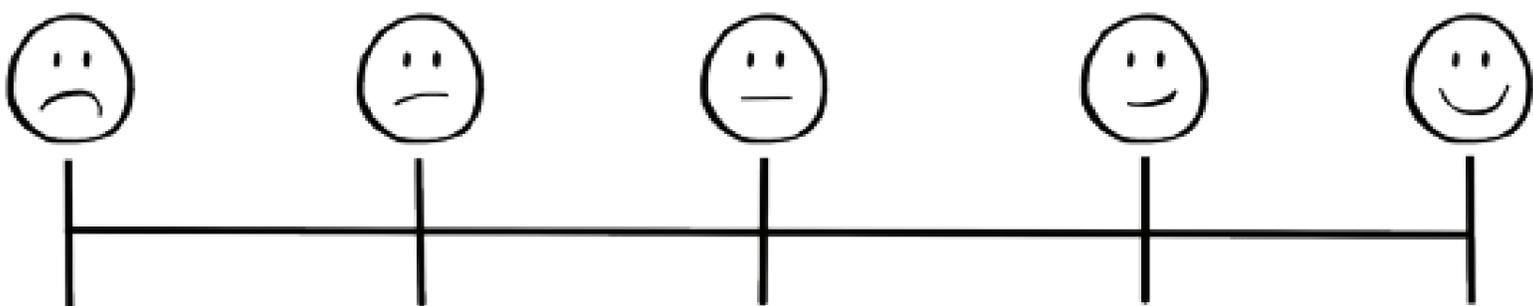
Step 5: Connect
 Share your thoughts with your classmates.

FIST TO FIVE

You don't always have to verbally communicate. Use First to Five to communicate through body language

	Fist = I am very uncomfortable and cannot move on.		1 Finger = I am uncomfortable and need some help before I can move on.		2 Fingers = I am a little uncomfortable but I want to try to move on.
	3 Fingers = I am not sure how I am feeling.		4 Fingers = I am comfortable enough to move on.		5 Fingers = I am ready to move on!

Thinking about someone else....



I am almost always uncomfortable

I am usually uncomfortable

I am sometimes comfortable, sometimes uncomfortable

I am usually comfortable

I am almost always comfortable